

United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Special Rapporteur for human rights in former Yugoslavia reports Bosnian Serb forces committed massive human rights violations in Gorazde; calls for UNPROFOR presence to monitor treatment of Serb minority in enclave.
- + Talks scheduled between Croatian government and Serb authorities in Plitvice today and tomorrow cancelled.
- + Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi continues talks aimed at achieving dialogue between parties and cease-fire in Yemen.
- + South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking on Day of African Child says democracy and freedom important for children's quality of life.
- + UNAMIR cancels cease-fire talks in Kigali as mortar and small arms fire continued in and around capital.
- + Delegates in Vienna meet to consider the International Nuclear Safety Convention; IAEA Director-General, Hans Blix, says if nuclear power to be attractive energy option, safety is fundamental.

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Bosnian Serb forces had committed massive human rights violations during their March/April offensive in the Central Bosnian town of Gorazde, according to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki. In his report, Mr. Mazowiecki said it was clear war crimes had been committed in the enclave and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. The "fierce attack" on the enclave, declared a "safe area" by the Security Council last year, had caused government authorities to lose control of part of the territory. Civilian targets had been deliberately targeted and there had been interference with attempts to bring care to the wounded.

The Special Rapporteur noted that Bosnian government forces had also committed human rights violations, but not on the same scale as the Bosnian

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Serbs. He also expressed concern over emerging animosity by local Muslims towards their Serb neighbours. He urged that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) retain a strong presence in the enclave to reassure the local population, reduce risks of further attacks, and to monitor the treatment of the local Serb minority population.

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Talks scheduled by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) between the Croatian government and the Serb authorities in Plitvice today and tomorrow have been cancelled. ICFY Ambassador Kai Eide told correspondents in Zagreb that in spite of earlier agreements on all details of the planned talks, problems arose because of concerns by the Serb side in recent days.

Mr Eide said that he deeply regretted the decision by the Croat and Serb leaders not to go ahead with the talks. It was very important that after months of diplomatic efforts people who had been suffering as a result of the conflict and the economic breakdown see some progress. The mediators and the international community had done their utmost to get the negotiations started and still regarded the agreement by both sides to meet in Plitvice to be standing, he added.

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Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, Head of the fact-finding mission to Yemen, held talks in Riyadh today with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Saud Al-Faissal. Yesterday, he was in Sana'a where he had discussions with President Abdullah Saleh and later he met with senior officials, led by the acting Prime Minister, Mohamed Said Al-Attar. Also present at the second meeting were the Vice-Prime Minister, Abdel Wahab Al-Amssi, the Minister of Planning and Development, Abdel Kerim Al-Iryani, and Foreign Minister Mohamed Salem Basendwah.

During his meetings in Sana'a, Mr. Brahimi discussed a joint military commission to observe a cease-fire between the warring parties in Yemen. President Saleh said he was willing to develop good relationships with countries in the region, and also agreed to participate in the military commission meetings in either Damascus, Riyadh, Cairo or Rabat. President Saleh expressed his full support for Mr. Brahimi's and United Nations activities in Yemen. Mr. Brahimi described the talks as useful as regards starting a dialogue between the parties and a cease-fire.

In a related development, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) begun evacuating foreigners from Yemen today. An IOM ship left Aden carrying 900 nationals from Cuba, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the Sudan, the Russian Federation, Tunisia, the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as from Poland and Palestine.

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South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu today stressed the importance of freedom, democracy and their impact on the quality of children's lives. He was speaking at a Headquarters press conference to mark the fourth Day of the African Child. Noting President Nelson Mandela's plans for free health care for children under six and expectant mothers, Archbishop Tutu said that prior to the end of apartheid, the health of children in South Africa had been at grave risk. He stressed the need for similar benefits for children in other parts of Africa.

Archbishop Tutu also called for the demilitarization of Africa. He said in many countries armies had been used against their own citizens to uphold dictatorial regimes. They represented powerful elites and "gobbled up" resources that could be used to provide water, schools, homes and ensure children had primary health care.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) proclaimed 16 June as the Day of the African Child to mark the 1976 massacre of children in Soweto and to focus world attention on the progress made for children by African countries and the challenges still facing them.

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The United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) cancelled cease-fire talks scheduled for today as mortar and small arms fire continued in and around Kigali, according to a spokesman for the Organization. The UNAMIR Deputy Force Commander met with Rwandan Government forces to discuss the cease-fire situation and in particular the security around the airport with a view to resuming flights.

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Delegations from 83 member States and four international organizations met today at International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) headquarters in Vienna to consider the final text of an International Nuclear Safety Convention. The Convention's aim is to ensure the safety of land-based civil nuclear power plants, and their storage, handling and treatment facilities for radioactive materials.

The Director-General of the IAEA, Hans Blix, told delegates that assurances of safety and the peaceful use of nuclear power were fundamental if it was to remain an attractive option for meeting the growing global demand for energy. The safe use of nuclear energy, was essentially a national responsibility. However, international efforts in the area of safety recognized the interdependence of all participants in the nuclear fuel cycle. An accident anywhere had global ramifications in terms of public confidence in nuclear power as a major energy source, the Director-General added.

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